

F A C T S

RELATING TO

HOSPITAL NURSES;

In Reply to the Letter of

“ONE WHO HAS WALKED A GOOD MANY HOSPITALS,”

Printed in THE TIMES of 13th April last :

ALSO,

OBSERVATIONS ON TRAINING ESTABLISHMENTS
FOR HOSPITAL AND PRIVATE NURSES.

BY

JOHN F. SOUTH,

Senior Surgeon of St. Thomas's Hospital.

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THE following pages were begun with the object of their publication in the "Times," in reply to a letter inserted in that journal on Wednesday, the 13th ult., with the heading "Hospital Nurses," and the signature "One who has walked a good many Hospitals."

It had not been my intention to do more than refute the untrue statements and expose the scurrilous insinuations of the writer of that letter, and to put before the public a sketch of the *facts* relating to the NURSING ARRANGEMENTS of the "large London hospitals," of which people in general are totally ignorant, as the assertions, for some months past, made in reference to them are as unfounded, as they have been occasionally disgusting. The importance of the subject, however, which, under its present form, has been described as a "great opprobrium," and "a great disadvantage," and the necessity of fully discussing it, for the purpose of disproving these assertions and showing their utter want of foundation, have extended my observations to a greater length than might be fitting for publication in a journal, and have induced me to print them in their present form instead of in the "Times," which I should have preferred, as the readers of the

untrue and offensive letter would then have had the opportunity of reading its refutation.

Incidentally, also, I have noticed the existing Establishments for the training of Nurses, more especially to improve that class of persons whose services are so frequently required in private families, and in the advantages to be derived from which I fully concur. At the same time, however, I cannot help observing, that, from some cause or other, which I should be sorry to fathom, the existing institutions for this purpose have been almost entirely ignored, as I shall hereafter show.

JOHN F. SOUTH.

Blackheath Park,
May 4, 1857.

HOSPITAL NURSES.

IN the "Times" of Wednesday, the 13th ult., a very flippant and scurrilous letter was published on the subject of "Hospital Nurses," with the signature "One who has walked a good many Hospitals." Having had some experience of "one large London hospital" (St. Thomas's), to which I have been attached about four-and-forty years, the latter twenty-three years of which as one of the surgeons, I cannot longer allow to remain unanswered the statements made in that letter, which are, however, reiterations only, in more offensive form, of the attacks on hospital nurses with which for some months past the public has been abused. And as the general arrangements of the nursing service are, for the most part, very generally alike throughout the large metropolitan hospitals, the mode of conducting it at St. Thomas's may be taken as a fair example of the manner in which it is carried on in London.

I am not at all disposed to allow that the nursing establishments of our hospitals are inefficient, or that they are likely to be improved by any special "Institution for the training, sustenance, and protection of nurses and hospital attendants," for reasons to be given after I have replied to and disproved the

numerous truthless assertions and insinuations of "One who has walked a good many Hospitals."

As to the TREATMENT WHICH NURSES RECEIVE.—I deny that they are "lectured by committees," even should lecturing be required, as that duty belongs to the steward and matron; and in matters of great gravity, which are very infrequent, is undertaken by the treasurer. They are not "preached at by the chaplain," who has ample occupation in the discharge of his spiritual duties among the patients, and has nothing whatever to do with the nurses, though, if dissatisfied with what he sees or hears of their conduct, he reports it to the steward or matron. They are, it is true, overlooked and controlled, and, when necessary, reprov'd by these officers, to whom the immediate internal management of the house is intrusted by the governors; but they are also encouraged by praise and more substantial marks of satisfaction for their good conduct.

As to the nurses being "sworn at by surgeons and bullied by dressers," I assert that this statement, as regards St. Thomas's Hospital, is simply *untrue*; and from my personal knowledge of most of the surgeons of the "large London hospitals," I without hesitation deny the truth of such charges attaching to either of them; and I call upon "One who has walked a good many Hospitals" to point out that or those in which he knows of such conduct, and the surgeons who so disgrace themselves and their profession, and forget their character as Christians and gentlemen. Being "bullied by dressers" is about equally true as the former assertion: the nurses are too well assured of the countenance and protection of the surgeons to

submit to such behaviour ; and though it occasionally, yet very rarely happens, that among the number of young men who hold these appointments there may be a cross-grained, ill-bred fellow, who gives himself airs, the nurse quickly complains, and the evildoer is reproved and made to conduct himself properly.

It is *utterly false* that the nurses are “insulted if old and ill-favoured :” first, because that, of the eighteen sisters or head nurses of our house, there are *but three above fifty years of age*. These have been servants of the establishment for periods varying *between seventeen and twenty-two years*, who are treated by both surgeons and dressers as if they were old superior family servants. And secondly, because it would not be permitted, in consequence of the mutual respect and attachment which subsist between the surgeon and the sister who has for many years presided over his ward, as is commonly the case in these “large hospitals,” and is well known to those frequenting particular hospitals, and thereby becoming acquainted with the mutual relations of the surgeons and sisters better than the “One who has walked a good many Hospitals,” probably without knowing much of either. As to being “talked flippantly to if middle-aged and good-humoured,” I am not aware that either harm or inconvenience comes of kind and cheerful carriage towards those with whom, as nurses, surgeons must, if they do their duty, have necessarily much to say.

“One who has walked a good many Hospitals,” in the discharge of his self-assumed overseership of hospital-nurse morals, winds up his statements by asserting that the nurses are “tempted and seduced if young and well-looking.” That this is *false* I un-

hesitatingly affirm. In the forty-four years I have spent in St. Thomas's Hospital I cannot recall more than two instances of misconduct among the sisters of our house; possibly fewer than the number of those female servants who have misconducted themselves within the same period in the censor's own family, if he have a household. The character and reputation of hospital sisters are as dear to them, as highly valued, and as justly entitled to protection from slander, as those of the first women in the land; and under circumstances of great trial, to which they are necessarily subject, I do not hesitate to assert that, for modesty and self-respect, they will bear comparison with a like number of women in any class of society; and that they present continual examples of self-denial and kind solicitude towards the patients intrusted to their care, for which they receive no other reward than the thanks of the poor sufferers and the testimony of their own good conscience as to the faithful discharge of their duty.

Almost the only truthful part of the censor's statements is, that the nurses are "mostly attentive and rarely unkind;" but be it observed this follows immediately after he has designated them as "*meek, pious, saucy, drunken, or unchaste, according to circumstances or temperament!!!*" of which he has about as much knowledge as he possesses on other matters on which, he imagines, he pleasantly descants. May not be used to this defamer of women who go about among disease and death with their life in their hand, that celebrated exclamation of Lord Brougham's, "Come forth, thou slanderer?"

Having thus reviewed, and I hope refuted, to the

satisfaction of the reader, the untrue assertions of the "One who has walked a good many Hospitals," I will now state the *facts*, which can be easily verified by any one who may choose to inquire, in reference to the nursing establishment of St. Thomas's Hospital, which may be taken as a fair example of the usage throughout all the "large London hospitals."

For the ordinary service of each ward, the nurses are of three kinds: two, or it may be three according to the size of the ward, of these are day-nurses, and the third is the night-nurse. The day-nurses are of two and very different grades and qualifications—the head nurse, or "sister," as she is called in three of the "large London hospitals," and the nurse, as she is there called, or "ward-maid," as she is more properly designated in the Dublin hospitals. Each of the three has her distinct duty; but the control and responsible charge of the ward rests with the "sister," or head nurse, and the nurse, or "ward-maid," has the menial offices to perform.

The sister has much the same duty imposed on her as has a good private nurse. She receives the directions of the physician or surgeon to whose ward she is attached as to the administration of medicine, diet, and other matters requiring attention; and she reports to the apothecary or house-surgeon, in the absence of her physician or surgeon, any circumstances which call for immediate attention; or if not requiring special report, she gives, when the physician or surgeon makes his visit, an account of the condition of the patient since the previous visit. She takes care that the nurse, or ward-maid, does her duty, and that the patients do not infringe the regulations of

the hospital. In severe cases she pays more especial attention to the patients ; and this is particularly seen in the surgical wards, as regards serious accidents and operations ; under which circumstances she is as constantly with the patient, day and night—often for many together—as is the dresser, whose duty is to be on watch at the bedside so long as the surgeon thinks needful. Not unfrequently this duty becomes very heavy ; but she cheerfully discharges it, in hope of being rewarded by the recovery of the patient and the approbation of her surgical superior, who is almost invariably anxious to encourage her in the laborious discharge of her duty, and to award her just share of praise in assisting him, with God's blessing, to the successful conduct of important cases to their conclusion, which, but for her unremitting care and womanly aid, would not have attained a successful issue, however great and eminent the medical and surgical talents and attainments of the surgeon. Only those who have operated much know how greatly the success of operations depends on good nursing ; and it may be taken as an undoubted fact, that in those hospitals where operations and bad accidents do best, there are the sisters, or head nurses, most attentive and intelligent. Each sister is provided with a bed-room and sitting-room adjoining the ward, and one or both opening into it ; but the greater part of her day is spent in the ward ; and although she is presumed to go to bed regularly each night at a reasonable time, yet, as has been already mentioned, if she have any serious case on hand she is more frequently up night after night. She receives a salary paid quarterly, but has not *any* perquisites or rations, except beer.

The day-nurse, or ward-maid, performs for the ward the usual duties of a housemaid, as to cleaning and bed-making. She also makes and applies poultices and the like, in less important cases; attends to the wants of the patients confined to their beds or requiring such assistance as she can render; and washes such children as may chance to be in the ward. She comes on duty at six o'clock in the morning, and remains till eight o'clock in the evening, after which she retires to sup and sleep among her fellows in a spacious dormitory specially allotted to them. But though these are her regular hours, she, as well as the sister, is liable to be kept up all night. She is under the immediate superintendence and control of the sister, who reports her to the steward or matron if negligent. She receives wages, which are paid weekly, but has not any rations except beer.

The night-nurse comes on duty at eight o'clock in the evening, and remains on watch, moving continually about the ward, till six o'clock of the following morning, when the day-nurse arrives. She gives such medicine as may be due during her watch, renders any assistance which the patients require, and informs the sister of any change in the patients' condition which requires her attention. Her watch over, she remains till eleven o'clock assisting to clean up and put the ward to rights, after which she retires to the dormitory, has her dinner, and goes to bed from two till eight o'clock, when she gets up and prepares to go on duty in the ward to which she is attached. She receives weekly wages, but has not any rations except beer.

It may be passingly noticed, in reference to the

wages of the sisters and nurses, that the former are pretty fairly, certainly not *too* lavishly paid. The nurses, however, in my opinion, are for many reasons too scantily remunerated. I would not alter their money payment, but it would be very advisable they should be allowed rations in addition, which together would not too well reward them for their very hard work and toil, as they rarely sit down five minutes together during the whole day. Were this improvement made, I feel sure that a better class of ward servants would always be obtainable, and they would stay longer in the house, and become available, by their knowledge and good conduct, to be appointed sisters—a practice which formerly obtained in our hospitals, but has been for many years past discontinued, and is less likely to be revived under the present arrangements of the nursing department, which remain to be described.

It would naturally be presumed that the women filling the offices of sisters, and of nurses or ward servants, are not all of the same class. The sisters are selected from among intelligent and active persons in the prime of life—usually about thirty years of age—who are generally ascertained to be quick, and capable of understanding and attaining a knowledge of the duties required of them. They are not thrust at once into the wards, ignorant and unfitted for the responsibilities they assume, “to pick up a knowledge of their business as they best can.” They are at first taken as supernumeraries, or unattached, into the matron’s office, where, by their frequent errands into the wards, and communication with the attached sisters, they gradually attain an insight into the duties they will

have to undertake ; and after a while are sent for short periods into a ward, the sister of which is either ill and unable to attend to her duty, or is enjoying her annual short holiday. Her length of probation varies partly on the readiness with which she acquires a knowledge of the ward duties, and in part on the vacancies which occur by the retirement or discharge of sisters ; and I have known instances in which probationers have remained such—from the latter cause especially—for twelve or eighteen months, or even for a longer period, as among this superior class the change is not very frequent. The number of our sisters is four for the male and three for the female medical wards, and seven for the male and four for the female surgical wards—one sister to each ward. As a general rule, the sisters of the surgeons' wards remain so a longer period than those in the medical wards. Of the seven male surgical sisters, two have been sisters *eighteen*, and one *seventeen* years ; and of the four female surgical sisters, one has been sister *twenty-two*, another *fifteen*, and a third *twelve* years, and the fourth has been recently appointed. In Isaac's Ward, till very lately specially appropriated to stone cases, from 1813 to 1857 there have been only *four* sisters. In George's, my own male ward, the largest in the house, and containing forty patients, there have been within the same period *ten* sisters, of whom one, Mrs. Roberts, was sister *twelve* years, another *nine*, another *six*, another *five*, another *four*, and another, the present sister, *three* years, she having been previously *fifteen* years sister in other wards. I might go further, but the examples I have given are sufficient for my purpose. Of such women our hospital, as well as

other "large London hospitals," have had and still can furnish numerous examples—women most highly valued and trusted by the surgeons, who, having witnessed their constant, unwearied attention, and its happy results in the well-doing of their patients, are necessarily better judges of the value of their service than any other officers of the house.

Of the truthfulness of my statement in regard to the character and conduct of our sisters, old Borough students will readily bear witness, who remember Sister Accident and Sister Job at Guy's Hospital, and Sister Isaac and Sister George of St. Thomas's, forty years since. Nor can I here omit mention of our late Sister George, Mrs. Roberts, who, after an able service (specially in the management of patients operated on for the stone, and in the treatment of accidents) of *twenty* years, on account of failing health retired, whilst under fifty years of age, from the hospital with a well-deserved pension from the governors, and the sincere regard and esteem of all those with whom she had been specially connected.

It may not be out of place to mention here that Mrs. Roberts was sent out specially attached to Miss Nightingale, who had the advantage of her large practical knowledge and experience in hospital matters, such, indeed, as I do not hesitate to affirm was not possessed by *any other person; male or female*, who was connected with the Crimean hospitals, or with those in Turkey; for no one but herself had had twenty years' personal and practical experience of surgical ward duty and its requirements in a "large London hospital," where such knowledge can alone be obtained. She accompanied Miss Nightingale

during the whole of her sojourn in the East, nursed her through her severe illness soon after her arrival at Balaklava, and returned with her to London. As Mrs. Roberts's high qualifications for the service proposed to her to take were well understood at the time of her engagement; as she did not go out for mere pecuniary gain, having an amply sufficient income for all her wants and wishes, but was among the very few who went out with the anxious desire to render their services to the poor sufferers who greatly needed it; and as the pay she received is the best indication of the presumed value of her assistance, I cannot but regret that her name has never been mentioned in any notice of the Scutari and Balaklava nursing services.

To return, after this long digression, to the probationary sister, who may now be supposed appointed to a ward. It must not be assumed that up to this time her education is complete. She has still much to learn, which can only be attained in the ward by the kind and patient assistance and guidance of the physician or surgeon to whom she is attached. What sort of attendant she shall be depends, *cæteris paribus*, mainly on him. If he direct, assist, and encourage her, and she be moderately intelligent and attentive, she will soon become efficient, and repay his trouble by her trustfulness. If he be careless and indifferent to her, she will probably take no pains to learn, take little interest in his cases, and ultimately become more trouble than profit. I have seen examples of both classes; but it has been my good fortune to have among the few sisters who have assisted me in my wards scarcely one to whom I am not deeply in-

debted for the successful issue of many operations and important cases, which, without their untiring watchfulness, disinterested kindness, and large experience of the outbreak of symptoms which require immediate attention, would have terminated fatally; and I feel grateful in having this opportunity of expressing my obligation to two sisters, and my estimation of their worth, one of whom has been in one of my wards *seventeen* years, and the other *eighteen* years, with a short interval in another ward; good offsets, I think, against the “meek, pious, saucy, careless, drunken, and unchaste” of the “One who has walked a good many Hospitals.” I may also add, with reference to these sisters, that the former has educated one of her two children at the medical school of King’s College Hospital, as she wisely saw the inconvenience which would arise from bringing him up in our own school, and that he is now a member of the Royal College of Surgeons; whilst the only child of the latter is clerk in the office of a respectable builder at the west end of the town. Our Lord says, “By their fruits ye shall know them;” and I trust the slanderous “One who has walked a good many Hospitals” will be as happy in bringing up his children, if he have any, as are these women, who are to be improved by the new method.

As regards the nurses, or ward-maids, these, as I have said, are much in the condition of housemaids, and require little teaching beyond that of poultice-making, which is easily acquired, and the enforcement of cleanliness, and attention to the patients’ wants. They need not be of the class of persons required for sisters, not having such responsibilities. As a general rule,

the nurses do not stay in the same hospital or the same ward more than a year or two, being, like many household servants, fond of change. I have known but few of these persons who have become competent to promotion into the higher class. Of late years, however, they have been much improved, specially the night nurses, by the dormitory system; and if encouragement by increased remuneration, and the certainty of promotion to the well conducted and capable were held out, I feel assured that the applications for appointment as nurses or ward servants would not be wanting from women of better station than those we now have, even though they might be "widows with two or three children," which our hospital experience proves to work not quite so badly as the experienced "One who has walked a good many Hospitals" asserts.

I now come to the consideration of the proposed panacea for the improvement of the disreputable and inefficient class of "hospital nurses" (sisters so called included) which the excursions of "One who has walked a good many Hospitals" have discovered, but which my visits to all the London, almost all the provincial hospitals of England, and the Dublin hospitals have not disclosed to me; though I am free to confess that in a very, very few hospitals a better class of persons might be employed: but poor hospitals, like poor people, are generally obliged to cut their coats according to their cloth, and scramble on as well as their means admit; for the number of these institutions, which have wealthy and influential sureties enabling them to incur heavy incumbrances without any clear prospect of getting out of them, is but very few.

The establishment of an "institution for the training, sustenance, and protection of nurses and hospital attendants" was the mode proposed at a very influential meeting held at Willis's Rooms on the 30th November, 1855, for the application of the fund then about to be raised in testimony of the public estimation of the noble services of Miss Nightingale in the military hospitals of the East. In explaining the reasons for the proposed application many statements were made, which, if true, are highly discreditable to English civil hospitals, and which were, and are, exceedingly offensive to the medical and other officers of these establishments. Relying, however, on the certainty that, in the long run, these misstatements would be proved erroneous, no pains were taken to refute what had been stated by individuals whose experience of hospital affairs was not *very* large. Letter after letter, however, and assertion after assertion have been put forward on the mismanagement and misconduct of hospital nurses; so that, by frequent repetition, the statements made are beginning to be assumed as facts, and the matter seems wound up by the volley of hard words and ill names poured upon hospital nurses by "One who has walked a good many Hospitals," who seems desirous, to the best of his ability, to add to the "much unmerited abuse" of which he truly says "hospital nurses have for the last year or two been the victims." Under these circumstances I feel it is no longer right to allow these statements to remain uncontradicted and disproved, more especially as, if so left, they may be reiterated on any seemingly convenient occasion.

It is due to Sir John Pakington to state that, when

advocating at Willis's Rooms the propriety of establishing the proposed training institution "to supply what was no doubt a deficiency *in our otherwise admirably-conducted hospitals*,"* he appears to have had no wish to decry those noble establishments, to be nowhere found† but in our own happy and highly-favoured England, but only to improve the deficiency under which he had been led to suppose they laboured, and which, I hope, I have shown does not exist. Difference of opinion may occur among men upon the best mode of carrying out their common object, but expressed as it has been by Sir John Pakington, no one could feel aggrieved or angered; but, on the contrary, would be glad to appropriate the praise of such a man, although not on every point agreeing with him. The next speaker, Sir William Heathcote, stated that which neither was nor is the fact, and which he might have known had he taken the trouble, before he made his speech, to visit the hospitals in London, or generally throughout England. He supported the proposed training institution "to remove from England the *great opprobrium*, that, magnificent as were her hospitals, they were *not attended by nurses qualified as they ought to be for their important duties*." Of which I simply observe, that Sir William is not, from his knowledge or experience, a judge; and I would suggest to him the possibility of the managers of St. George's Hospital, to which he is a subscriber, not being particularly gratified by the manner in which

* "Times," Dec. 1, 1855.

† The foreign hospitals are almost invariably supported by the Government of the country instead of by private funds and subscriptions as in Great Britain, and, to a certain extent, in Ireland.

he states, as regards the important department of nursing, that institution, included among the "large London hospitals," is conducted. The last and most influential speaker on this occasion was Mr. Sidney Herbert, who stated that by this proposed institution Miss Nightingale "*might be enabled to rescue our hospitals from a great disadvantage under which they at present laboured, to raise the system of nursing to a pitch of efficiency never before known here*"!! The language used is indeed milder, but it is not less stinging, nor more founded on fact, than Sir William Heathcote's. Perhaps these gentlemen have founded their opinion on a statement in the "Medical Gazette" of 1848,* in which it is asserted, that "all who are professionally conversant with the condition of English hospitals are aware of the *present inadequate supply of well-trained nurses in them*"—an opinion which I am quite certain not a hospital physician or surgeon, except the writer of that article, entertains. Perhaps the hospital to which he belonged at that time furnished his notion of the nursing establishments as existing in other London hospitals with which he was not so well acquainted, but the statement is not borne out by facts. Mr. Herbert has been, however, a governor of St. Bartholomew's Hospital from 1854, and either in the following year, or in 1856, was elected a governor of Guy's Hospital; and had he visited and inquired into, and observed, the nursing establishments of these noble institutions, he would have known that the system of nursing there carried out *was and is efficient*; and whenever he finds it convenient to make such inquiry, I think he will regret the statement he made

* Vol. VI., p. 827.

with reference to hospital nursing arrangements and efficiency.

In 1851 was published a pamphlet, giving account of “The Institution of Kaiserswerth on the Rhine for practical training of Deaconesses,” which includes their instruction in nursing. This, the nursing department, the writer, whoever he or she may be, of the pamphlet warmly advocates, and makes the following statement, in order to show the needfulness of such an establishment in England:—“We see,” says the writer, “as every one conversant with hospitals well knows, *a school*, it may almost be said, *for immorality and impropriety*—inevitable where women of bad character are admitted as nurses, *to become worse by their contact with the male patients and the young surgeons*—inevitable where the nurses have to perform *every* office in the male wards, which it is undesirable to exact from women of good character, how much more so from those of bad?—inevitable where the examination of females must take place before a school of medical students. We see the nurses drinking; we see the neglect at night owing to their falling asleep.” Where the writer has obtained such experience I do not pretend to guess; but the statement, in almost every particular, is, according to my experience, *entirely untrue* as regards the persons employed in nursing—*untrue* as to the nurses being required to do more than *every private* nurse is *required* to do, and does, in her attendance on people of gentle blood—and a *gross libel* as regards “the young surgeons,” who, if they be so profligate as the writer would seem to suggest, are not likely to mend their ways, or to become the sort of persons any one would

be particularly desirous of admitting into the privacy of his family. If the writer's experience of medical men, young or old, give him or her a right to make such statement, I am afraid that he or she has fallen into *very bad medical company*; for I do not hesitate to affirm that, with temptations, of necessity, infinitely greater, and opportunities far more convenient than those which present themselves to any other class of society, the medical men of England, whether students or practitioners, *can bear comparison, without hesitation or fear, with any other profession or calling, either in reference to morals or religion*, as those who have largest opportunity of witnessing their conduct, especially among the poor and needy, will readily testify.

I cannot doubt that many who enter so warmly into the proposal of establishing an institution, which, among other matters, is to include "the *protection* of nurses and hospital attendants," have taken their notions of the condition and conduct of hospital nurses from statements derived from, or very like to, those just cited from the account of the Kaiserswerth Institution, without ever having been within the walls of a hospital, or really knowing, or taking pains to know, anything about the matter. All such, and all those who desire to know anything about hospital nursing, I would beg to refer to the simple statement of facts which I have brought in the former part of this letter in refutation of the calumnious assertions of "One who has walked a good many Hospitals;" the proof of which is easy, as at my own hospital at least, and as, I believe, at every other hospital in London and in the provinces, there is always the greatest readiness to show these establishments to visitors, if coming to them

when the wards are not occupied by the physicians or surgeons. And I might also call for the testimony of Miss Shaw Stewart, sister of Sir Michael Shaw Stewart, Bart., who has been living for many months past in various wards in Guy's, St. Thomas's, and St. Bartholomew's Hospitals, watching the daily proceedings, and making, as I am informed, large notes of what she observes, whether the sisters, or even the nurses or ward servants, are the persons they are said or insinuated to be, and whether the "young surgeons" have, to her knowledge, conducted themselves with immorality or ill-manners in their daily communications with the sisters and nurses.

As regards that part of the project, the establishment of an "Institution for the training and sustenance of nurses and hospital attendants," it divides itself into two parts—hospital nursing and private nursing.

Of the former of these—that is to say, the *training of hospital "sisters" or head nurses*, excluding the ward servants, with us called "nurses"—I think I have shown that we *have* within our own hospitals all the appliances for making the best sisters, and our experience, of which I have shown the results, proves that we *do* make them. Therefore, so far as we, the hospitals, are concerned, a training institution for our sisters or nurses is entirely unneeded and superfluous. That this proposed hospital nurse-training scheme has not met with the approbation or support of the medical profession is beyond all doubt. The very small number of medical men whose names appear in the enormous list of subscribers to the fund, "to enable Miss Nightingale to establish an institution for train-

ing," &c., cannot have passed unobserved. But the remarkable fact remains to be pointed out, that, of the *ninety-four physicians*, including principal, assistant, accoucheur, and consulting physicians, and of the *seventy-nine principal and assistant surgeons* of the *seventeen hospitals of London*, only THREE PHYSICIANS AND ONE SURGEON FROM ONE,* and ONE PHYSICIAN FROM A SECOND HOSPITAL,† are found among the supporters of the scheme. This seems to me accounted for by their knowledge of the nursing establishments of their hospitals being as near as can what they should be, and perhaps also may be considered an indication of their disapproval of the observations made on the establishments with which they are connected by individuals who had not knowledge of the subject on which they undertook to descant.

The other part of the subject, the *education of private nurses*, requires a little more discussion to show that even here the proposed training establishment is not necessary, and that it cannot be so effectual as the method of training private nurses, which has more or less quietly and unostentatiously proceeded for the *last seventeen years* with most satisfactory results. I cannot avoid stating that it is very remarkable, and perhaps it might be added disingenuous, that at the meeting in Willis's Rooms these attempts should have been altogether ignored by every speaker except Sir John Pakington, who observed that "already in London is a small institution of that description‡ which had been attended with signal suc-

* King's College Hospital.

† St. George's Hospital.

‡ I believe the Institution of Nursing Sisters was the one alluded to.

cess, and against which he had never heard complaint alleged, except that it was constructed on so limited a plan that it was altogether inadequate to supply the demands which were continually made upon it." * This statement was made, most probably, in the hearing of one of the most influential speakers of the meeting, *who had the services of a trained person from the Institution of Nursing Sisters in the years 1848, 1849, and 1850*, but perhaps in the excitement of the meeting it escaped his memory.

For the information of the public it is right to state that there have been in London for many years *two training institutions* for nurses, namely, the INSTITUTION OF NURSING SISTERS founded in 1840 by the exertions of the late Mrs. Fry, and the TRAINING INSTITUTION FOR NURSES founded in 1848, principally, I believe, by the exertions of the Rev. E. H. Plumtre and Mr. Bowman.

The INSTITUTION OF NURSING SISTERS proposes only to prepare and provide nurses. They live at the institution house during their instruction at the hospitals, and, when considered capable, remain in the house in readiness for engagement by persons of every station from the highest to the lowest, subject to the control and disposal of the lady superintendent, who appoints them to such cases as she thinks they are best suited to tend. She receives all the applications for sisters, and conducts the correspondence of the institution, being herself subject to the direction of the committee of ladies who manage the establishment without any male assistance. The women who purpose to become *nursing sisters* are examined as to their general quali-

* "Times," Dec. 1 1855.

fications, and the lady committee having been satisfied therewith they are sent, if not previously nurses, to a large hospital, where they remain in the wards for sufficient length of time to attain a knowledge of their required duty by attentively watching the proceedings of the sister of the ward, attending the visits of the medical officers, being present at the performance of operations, and rendering such assistance as they by degrees become competent to afford. They return to their meals and to sleep at the institution house, or some convenient place in the immediate neighbourhood of the hospital, except when prevented by the hospital arrangements. The nursing sisters under instruction have enjoyed the large opportunities for acquiring practical knowledge afforded by Guy's Hospital from the first foundation of the institution in 1840 ; and within the last five or six years they have been also received at St. Thomas's, where we have constantly two or three of them. I must confess that when they first came I was not at all in favour of the arrangement, as I feared inconvenience would arise from interference with the ward duties and with the comfort of the sister of the ward, which I consider it is always the duty of the medical officer to promote ; but I have much pleasure in stating that my fears on this point have entirely passed away. The women are attentive and observant, quiet and obliging, at all times ready to afford any assistance or service desired of them, and on the best possible terms with the sisters of the wards. When considered qualified they return to the institution house, where they continue under the control of the lady superintendent, who, as sisters are required and applied for, appoints

them to such service as they are best fitted for, for a period of six weeks; on the lapse of which, if their attendance be further required, permission is given for a like period, and so on: but whenever the case is concluded the sister returns to the institution house, and is subject to the orders of the lady superintendent. They receive fixed wages, and wear a modest dark-coloured dress and plain cap, neither of which, however, in its peculiar form or cut, attracts particular attention. In the simple but excellent printed address given to these nursing sisters by the institution, after having detailed their professional duties, the following paragraph shows that the religious advantages which a nurse may afford to a suffering patient are not forgotten, and are capable of being afforded whether the nurse be a *Baptist, Churchwoman, or Independent*;* Christian charity, or loving-kindness, being catholic or universal, and not hemmed in by the narrow-mindedness which too often is fostered by each section of professing Christians—Church-people or dissenters—who imagine that theirs only is the royal road to heaven. The passage in the address says:—"We hope that, 'constrained by the love of Christ,' you will anxiously watch every opportunity of leading your patient to seek strength and comfort where alone it is to be found, and to draw near to Him 'who is ever waiting to be gracious.' We would press upon you to be cautious *not to interfere with the duties of the clergyman or other minister of religion*, but always to *respect in silence the religious opinions* of those amongst whom you may be placed." The propriety and excellence of this advice cannot be doubted. The number

* "Medical Gazette," vol. VI., p. 827, 1848.

of nursing sisters at the present time engaged is about ninety; and I appeal to the numerous physicians and surgeons of high standing in their profession as to their estimation of their excellent conduct and service. The income of the institution from June 21, 1855, to June 21, 1856, was 3,871*l.* 3*s.* 6*d.*, of which 2,366*l.* 1*s.* 6*d.* was received as payment for the *sisters' services*. During the same time the outgoings were,—*salaries of sisters* 1,769*l.* 12*s.* 6*d.*; their clothing 190*l.* 11*s.* 8*d.*; housekeeping and other expenses 759*l.* 11*s.* 2*d.*; and a balance at the bankers' of 1,151*l.* 8*s.* 2*d.*; making up the sum of 3,871*l.* 3*s.* 6*d.*

The other institution, the St. John's House *Training Institution for Nurses*, designs "to improve the qualification and to raise the character of nurses for the sick by providing for them professional training, together with moral and religious discipline, under the care of a clergyman, aided by the influence and example of a lady superintendent and other resident sisters." The officers consist of "a master, lady superintendent, and two physicians;" but "no person who is not a member of the United Church of England and Ireland, as by law established, is competent to act on the council or to fill any office in the institution." The master must be a clergyman of the United Church of England and Ireland, in priest's orders, a married man or a widower. He is "to frame rules, to be approved by the council, for the maintenance of discipline throughout the institution, and to be responsible for the due observance of all regulations;" he also performs the duties of a daily chaplain and secretary. The lady superintendent, "aided by the counsel and under the direction of the

master," but without the control or assistance of any female committee, is intrusted with "the control of the three classes of inmates, the framing of rules for their guidance, and the regulation of all domestic arrangements; of which matters she may from time to time report to the council and house committee (who they are, whether male or female, or both, is not mentioned) as shall seem to her to be requisite." The inmates consist of three classes:—"1. *Sisters*. Ladies who are willing to devote themselves to the work of attending the sick and poor and of educating others for those duties. 2. *Probationers*. Women under training in this establishment and in the public hospitals of the metropolis, under the direction of the officers of the institution. 3. *Nurses*. Women who have passed satisfactorily their period of probation." It is further stated that "the probationers will receive instruction from the master and lady superintendent, and be properly trained and exercised in the particular duties of nurses," and "the period of probation will be determined according to their several capacity by the authorities of the hospitals and the officers of the institution." From 1848, at which time the institution was founded, the probationers were received at St. George's and at the Westminster and Middlesex Hospitals; but since Lady-day, 1856, at King's College Hospital. After being admitted nurses, their duties are "to attend the sick, both rich and poor, at hospitals or private houses, as the lady superintendent shall appoint, and, when at home in the institution, to perform such domestic duties as shall be assigned to them." Thus far the two training establishments are nearly alike, excepting the clerical assistance and a

male council at St. John's institution instead of a female committee, as at the Nursing Sisters' institution: but there the likeness ends.

The principal feature in the St. John's House institution is the class of sisters, whose duties are "to assist the master and lady superintendent in the instruction and general training of the probationers and in the domestic management; also, with the sanction of the parochial clergy, to visit such sick and aged poor as may be approved by the master and lady superintendent." Of this class I cannot but confess my feeling that it is, more than possibly, intended very cautiously and gently to attempt acquiring *control over the nursing department of the metropolitan hospitals in general*, and either to supersede the present matrons and the whole nursing arrangements, and supply them from St. John's House, as was done at King's College Hospital a twelvemonth since, or to slip in first one and then another St. John's sister as matronships become vacant, till at last the whole shall be under the management of this or some similar institution, which has indeed been already *more than suggested* as the best mode of conducting hospital nursing. As I am one of the old-fashioned sort, who have been taught and still prefer "to fear God and honour the king, and meddle not with those who are given to change," except upon the very positive and distinct evidence of great advantage from change—and from the experience I have had being satisfied that in the "large London hospitals" the matrons are fully competent to perform their duty without affiliation to any special society, and that *hospital nursing is well done*—I cannot avoid stating

that I should be extremely sorry that the governors of either of these institutions should give the control of these matters out of their own hands, and introduce an *imperium in imperio*, which, in the long run, is always found mischievous and inconvenient. Therefore, whether my warning be or be not taken, with my present notions on the subject, I shall, to the utmost of my power, resist the introduction of matrons or sisters who are subject to any other than the immediate control of the hospital authorities, and I trust that the governors will participate in my opinion.

According to the last report, "St. John's House now numbers fifty-six members, viz., six resident sisters, thirteen associate sisters (ladies residing in the neighbourhood or elsewhere, but whose home duties will not allow them to work as resident sisters), *twenty-seven nurses*, and ten probationers." Of these there are at present employed on King's College Hospital, "the lady superintendent and four sisters, *fifteen nurses*, and *ten probationers*." The income of the institution from 1st April, 1855, to 31st March, 1856, was 2,525*l.* 1*s.* 5*d.*, of which 717*l.* 16*s.* was received for nurses' services, 133*l.* 18*s.* from sisters and probationers, and the remainder from other sources. The outlay during the same time: salaries, 170*l.*, nurses' wages, 354*l.* 12*s.* 4*d.*, and their clothing, 105*l.* 11*s.* 5*d.*, servants, housekeeping, and other expenses, 1,070*l.* 16*s.* 7*d.*, which, together with 600*l.* for purchase of stock and a balance of 224*l.* 1*s.* 1*d.*, make up the sum 2,525*l.* 1*s.* 5*d.*

Having, in the former part of this pamphlet, felt it necessary to advert with severity on the letter of "One who has walked a good many Hospitals," I am

glad to agree with him on the subject of his last paragraph, the fitness of making "A PROVISION FOR NURSES OF GOOD CHARACTER IN THEIR OLD AGE." With this the hospital sisters or nurses I conceive have nothing to do, at least those belonging to the "large London hospitals," as with the very ample funds which these establishments possess, I hold that the women who have faithfully and efficiently served them during the best part of their lives *deserve and have a moral right* to expect pensions from those institutions sufficient to keep them in comfort during their declining years, *not as matter of favour* but *of right*, after a fixed term of years and testimony of good conduct from the medical officers and matron. In some of the "large London hospitals," pensions of various amounts are granted, but *not* as matter of right; which, in my opinion, it ought to be, as I can see no difference between those who are daily confronting death in a hospital, and the sailor or soldier who confronts it when on service, except in favour of the hospital female attendants. Private nurses, however, and the nurses of small hospitals which cannot or scarcely can support themselves, and therefore cannot pension their servants, are in a very different condition. These women are not always in active employment, consequently what they save whilst employed, they have to live upon when disengaged, and therefore have little or no opportunity of putting by any provision for those days when their strength is insufficient to enable them to pursue their occupation. The result is that very few nurses, except those who are specially employed in private cases by operating surgeons, who, knowing the importance of

trusty nursing, have always one or more of these women instructed by themselves, each according to his own views, and some of the superior monthly nurses, rarely, if ever, at the latter end of their lives, have any means of their own, and are consequently obliged to fall back on the uncertain assistance of friends and relations, often as poor as themselves, or upon the certain assistance of the Union-house, "where they are allowed to earn a poor existence by doing drudgery." It is most cruel, as well as unjust, that poor, old, and worn out, though, in their former days, often very excellent nurses, should be reduced to this condition; and founding an Institution as an Asylum for these poor women, to whom society of every class is so deeply indebted, is not merely a work of Christian kindness, but the discharge of a heavy debt of gratitude.

JOHN F. SOUTH.

May 4. 1857.

